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**Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples**

# Tokelau

## Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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## V. Future status of the Territory

### A. Position of the administering Power

12. On 7 October 1996, during the general debate on decolonization issues in the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), including the question of Tokelau, the representative of the administering Power expressed his thanks to the United Nations and the Special Committee for the assistance they were providing to New Zealand and Tokelau by creating conditions for the people of the Territory to determine their future. He stated that Tokelau's progress towards self-government was on track. Concerned that future neglect could be the price to pay for greater self-reliance, Tokelau was seeking assurances from the international community, through the Special Committee and the United Nations, that States Members of the United Nations would not remain indifferent to the fate of a small population situated on three atolls in the Pacific Ocean. In particular, Tokelau needed an infrastructure, which was critical to the full development of self-government. It was already clear that any free-association formula must acknowledge that local resources could not adequately cover the material side of self-determination. This was one of the key lessons that New Zealand had drawn from its experience with Tokelau. Decolonization could be successfully achieved only through the participation in that process of the inhabitants of the Territory, the administering Power and the United Nations. In the case of Tokelau, considerable progress had been made as a result of successful interaction not just between Tokelau and New Zealand but between Tokelau, New Zealand and the United Nations (A/C.4/51/SR.3).

### B. Position of the people of Tokelau

13. The issue of self-determination is now under active consideration by the people of Tokelau, who have expressed a strong preference for a status of free association with New Zealand (A/AC.109/2009, para. 106).

## VI. Action by the General Assembly

14. On 13 December 1996, the General Assembly adopted resolution 51/145, which was specifically devoted to Tokelau.

*Notes*

[1] The information contained in the present paper has been derived from information provided to the Secretariat by the Permanent Mission of New Zealand to the United Nations in May 1997. The present working paper is an update of the working paper on Tokelau prepared by the Secretariat in 1996 (A/AC.109/2050).

# I. General

1. General information on Tokelau[1] is contained in previous working papers prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/2022 and 2050).

# II. Constitutional and political developments

2. Detailed information on the Tokelau Constitution as well as on constitutional developments is contained in previous working papers on Tokelau (A/AC.109/1193, paras. 3-26; A/AC.109/2022, paras. 5-7; A/AC.109/2050, paras. 2-10) and in the report of the Visiting Mission (A/AC.109/2009).

3. According to information provided by New Zealand, the administering Power, the process of constitutional development is continuing. The first draft of the Constitution of Tokelau was presented to the National Assembly in January 1997. The refinement of the document is being undertaken and it has been referred back to the villages and the respective subcommittees of the Special Constitutional Committee. Consideration is being given to what aspects of the Constitution can be implemented now, including, for example, the election of delegates to the National Assembly.

4. Tokelau also made progress in the area of law-making by promulgating its own legislation, thus enjoying the legislative powers conferred on it by the New Zealand Parliament in August 1996 (see A/AC.109/2050, paras. 3-6). Among the laws adopted were the Tokelau Post Office Amendment Rules 1996, as well as legislation that established the Telecommunications and Transport Corporations Administrative Regulations and other legislation regulating various aspects of Tokelau finances.

# III. Economic conditions

5. Detailed information on economic conditions in the Territory is contained in previous working papers on Tokelau (A/AC.109/1193, A/AC.109/2022 and A/AC.109/2050) and in the report of the Visiting Mission (A/AC.109/2009).

6. On 10 April 1997, the *Ulu-o-Tokelau* (the head of the Council of *Faipule* and the highest authority of Tokelau), Aliki Faipule Falima Teao, officially inaugurated Tokelau's new international telephone service by telephoning the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Mr. Jim Bolger. The administrative office of the newly established Telecommunication Tokelau Corporation (Telenok) is located in Fakaofo, one of the three atolls of Tokelau.

7. The total cost of the major telecommunications project is $NZ 4 million. New Zealand provided financial support in the amount of $NZ 1.5 million. Tokelau contributed $NZ 1.6 million, while the remainder was provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

8. The design and construction of the new system was implemented under the oversight of ITU personnel and ITU's Tokelauan counterpart, Telenok. The Australian telecommunications corporation Telstra installed three satellite earth stations under a contract in the amount of US$ 2 million in December 1996. The *aumaga* (village men) in each village of Tokelau assisted the project by laying cable ducts and building the antenna foundations. The system is designed in such a way that it allows individual service to every house in Tokelau.

9. The new telephone system, which also allows for facsimile transmission and data exchange, including access to the Internet, is the first of its kind in Tokelau, which is located in one of the most isolated areas in the South Pacific. As a result, the new system will provide an effective means of communication for the people of Tokelau and will contribute to the Territory's movement towards self-determination. Until now, Tokelau has had to rely on short-wave links to Apia, Western Samoa, and five-weekly mail ships for communications.

# IV. Social and educational conditions

10. Detailed information on social and educational conditions in the Territory is contained in a previous working paper on Tokelau (A/AC.109/1193) and in the report of the Visiting Mission (A/AC.109/2009).

11. A new educational curriculum is being developed for Tokelau to reflect issues of regional development, practical constraints and Tokelau values and aspirations. It is to place emphasis on delivering computer technology to schools, exploring and using other technology for the cost-effective delivery of education programmes to students, including mature students, and teachers. The new curriculum will be linked closely to New Zealand's educational curriculum.